



Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish,
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STIPA LETTERMANII **LETTERMAN'S NEEDLEGRASS**

Letterman's Needlegrass is a bunch-forming perennial with mostly glabrous stems that are 20-60 cm tall. The leaf blades are 1-1.5 mm wide and are threadlike or inrolled. Ligules are membranous, mostly 0.3 to 0.8 mm long, and with a straight margin. The narrow inflorescence is 10-15 cm long with erect branches. The spikelets consist of two glumes that are longer than and enclose a single floret. The glumes are 6-9 mm long with 3 nerves and pointed tips. The lemma is hardened in comparison to the glumes, is hairy with longer hairs towards the tip, and has a twisted, bent, glabrous awn from its tip which is about 1.5 cm long; the body of the lemma, excluding the awn, is 4-5.5 mm long. The palea is hairy, about 3.5 mm long, and usually at least 2/3 the length of the body of the lemma. Fruiting in late June-July.

Distinguished from other species of *STIPA* in Montana by having short, glabrous awns and paleas that are hairy and about 2/3 the length of the lemmas. A hand lens and technical key may be needed for positive identification.